**What is a food recall?**

A food recall is action taken to remove from distribution, sale and consumption, food which is unsafe. This means food that may cause illness or other physical harm to a person consuming the food.

A food recall may occur because of a report or complaint from manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, government and consumers. It may also occur as a result of a food business conducting internal testing and auditing.

The three primary objectives of a food recall are to:

- stop the distribution and sale of the product as soon as possible
- inform the government, the food businesses that have received the recalled food and the public (for consumer level recalls only) of the problem
- effectively and efficiently remove unsafe product from the marketplace.

A recall notification regarding a product sold from a food business will have details regarding the product affected (e.g. food type, brand name, package description and size, batch number, flavour line or similar identification). It will also include information on what to do with the product.

**Types of food recalls**

Recalls occur in consultation between state and territory government authorities and a sponsor, who is usually the product's supplier, for example, the manufacturer or the importer.

The recall will be one of two recall levels determined by the channels and extent of distribution of the food.

**Trade recall**

A trade recall is conducted when the food has not been sold directly to consumers. It involves recovery of the product from distribution centres and wholesalers. It may also involve recovery of product from hospitals, restaurants and other catering establishments.

**Consumer recall**

A consumer recall is the most extensive type of recall. It involves recovery of the food product from all points in the production and distribution chain including recovery of product in the possession of consumers.
Food recall plans

It is a legal requirement under Chapter 3 of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Code) for food manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors and importers to have a written food recall plan. The food recall plan must be available to an authorised person upon request and the business must comply with the recall system set out in the plan when recalling unsafe food.

While food retailers, such as supermarkets, are not legally required to have a recall plan (unless they are also involved in the wholesale, distribution or importation of food), the food retailer may be part of another food business’ recall plan and therefore are likely to play an important part in the retrieval of recalled food.

The purpose of a food recall plan is to enable a food business to efficiently recall unsafe food from the marketplace and consumers in order to protect public health and safety. In doing so, the assets of the business that include reputation and brand image are also preserved.

An effective food recall system ensures that recalled food isn't further distributed and is recovered from all points in the supply chain.

The FSANZ *Food Industry Recall Protocol* provides information on recalling food in Australia and guidance for food businesses on developing a written food recall plan. This document is available at www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/firp.

Conducting a food recall

A food business that identifies a food safety issue should contact the government authority in the Australian state/territory where the head office of the food business is located. Generally, the food business makes the decision to recall food. FSANZ helps food businesses to recall unsafe food in Australia by communicating recall information to the state and territory government agencies and industry groups. However, food businesses are responsible for ensuring that the public is notified of a recall.

For further information

Queensland Health have a variety of fact sheets with detailed information on food safety. Fact sheets can be accessed at www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety.

If you are unsure of what to do in the event of an official food recall or have any further questions, contact your local Queensland Health Public Health Unit. Contact details for Public Health Units are located at www.health.qld.gov.au/cho.